

will she do next? The very idea, taking in such vagabonds."

Just a week until Christmas and Robbie, Ruth Hartwell's errand boy was seen knocking at the door of all the poor families in the neighborhood and leaving an envelope in which was enclosed an invitation from Ruth to be present at her Christmas dinner with special treat for the children. After Ruth had laid all her plans and sent out her invitations she said to Aunt Liza "Let's have a Christmas dinner." "Law sakes, I'd like to know who you'd have, for I declare if you know your nearest neighbors and of course you'd only have the rich people." "No, Aunt Liza, we'll go out into the lanes and by ways for our Christmas guests." "Law sakes, Mrs. Hartwell, if you keep on,——" "why you'll have to take me to an insane asylum, won't you?" interrupted Ruth, with a clear silvery laugh. "Well I don't know, but you surely do act unlike yourself," answered Aunt Liza.

Just two days until Christmas, a bushy cedar tree occupied a prominent place in the Hartwell parlor. A savory odor from the kitchen filled the whole house. Aunt Liza was too busy to wipe the perspiration from her forehead, as she fairly flew from cellar to pantry and from pantry to kitchen. Ruth Hartwell returned from the village with great bundles of mystery to the household who wondered why she locked the parlor door behind her and put the key in her pocket? Why did she put the children to bed so early and sit up so late? "Why its just like it used to be," said Ruth to herself as she entered the sitting room near midnight and saw two little stockings hanging near the fire place. Christmas morning was clear and frosty. No curtains shut out the light in the Hartwell home, but instead was sunshine and laughter; the merry voices of the children mingling with the more subdued tones of their elders.

And such a dinner as graced Ruth Hartwell's festive board. But the joy of the little ones reached the climax when Ruth unlocked the parlor door and ushered them in to behold the doings of Santa Clause; for there the great bundles of mystery were explained. From the bushy cedar hung dolls and toys, shoes, stockings, dresses, and many useful articles and the tempting little sacks of candy and fruit. Christmas day was fast drawing to a close. Quietude reigned once more in the Hartwell home.

The children and domestics with the exception of Aunt Liza had gone early to bed. Ruth stood at the west window of her sitting room for a long time and looked at the tall white monument over in the churchyard as clearly seen under the light of the full moon. She thought of her loved ones up in heaven and won-

dered if their spirits did not mingle with the pleasures of the day. She thought of Him who eighteen hundred years ago lay an infant in the manger in far away Bethlehem. She turned and walked to where Aunt Liza was sitting at the fireplace, and looking down into the dear old wrinkled face which more an added charm under the glow of the beautiful light from the wood fire. She asked, so you still think I'm losing my mind Aunt Liza? to which Aunt Liza replied, no child, I see now that you have experienced a change of heart and are walking in a new light. "But what will I do with those ten lost years? How can I ever account for them?" "Don't look back" said Aunt Liza tenderly but like Paul, forgetting the things that are behind, press forward toward the prize.

"Yes, I see now the long suffering and mercy of God. For only for the heavenly vision where would I have been to night? said Ruth. But its getting late Aunt Liza and we must go to bed; and for the first time since Aunt Liza had been in her home which was many years, Ruth embraced her with the love of a daughter and imprinted a kiss on her wrinkled cheek. Aunt Liza was silent but tears gave expression to words she could not utter: and down deep in her heart she wished that Christmas day might never end.

Cedarville, O.

A CHRISTMAS SURPRISE

Such a large house it was where Sophie and Kate lived, and yet they were poor little children and their mother went out washing, and nursing sick people, and doing whatever she could to bring in money enough to pay the rent and buy food for the two hearty, rosy-cheeked little maidens.

It was a grand old house, but don't imagine that Sophie and Katie and Mrs. Kraus occupied the whole of it! Not at all. They had one large square room on the second floor, which was once used as a library and filled with beautiful books and paintings when this was a fashionable part of the city and a wealthy family lived here. But that was long ago, you see, and Sophie and Katie knew nothing about such splendors. Now there were two neat beds, a cooking-stove, some tables and chairs in it, and it was parlor, bedroom, dinnig-room, kitchen and all, for this little family. A very happy family there were too, in spite of their poverty, for the God who cares for the widow and the fatherless watched over them in the midst of the great busy city.

They did not have the luxuries and comforts that you do, but they made the best of what they had. That was what they made up their minds to do at Christmas-time. Mamma Kraus said they must not expect any new presents,

times were so hard, but she arranged with a jolly grocer at the corner for a little Christmas-tree and a few candles, and this was the great surprise that she had ready for Sophie and Katie when they came home from school the afternoon before Christmas. She had put it on a table covered with a pretty spread that she had made in Germany before she was married, and fastened the candles on when they came in. How they clapped their hands! Then they got out all their toys to trim it, and it was a very brave little tree when all was done.

But something even more surprising came the next day. The children went to a little mission Sunday-school, near their house, and they were to go there in the afternoon to sing carols and receive cornucopias of candy, they supposed. But when they reached the chapel it was so prattily trimmed that they hardly knew it, and there on the platform sat rows and rows of dolls, all beautifully dressed, while at their feet stood as many rows of drums.

There was a story about this. In a large Sunday-school in the upper part of the city the superintendent had asked the boys and girls if they would not try to find this year how much more blessed it is to give than to receive, and instead of getting presents themselves to give them, even though it was a good deal of a sacrifice, to the poor little children in the lower part of the city. And that was the way it came that this large school sent dolls and drums to three poor schools who would have had a very meagre celebration without them.

Sophie and Katie never forgot that afternoon. When the exercises were over and the dolls were being distributed they heard their own names called, and they went up to the platform hand in hand, their little hearts beating so fast and loud that it seemed to them every one must hear, and there were too of the loveliest of the lot put into their arms.

The lady who was giving them out said to some one near her,

"Those dolls were marked to be given to two poor but neat little girls, and I couldn't think of any one who deserves them more than those neat and sweet little Kraus girls, and I'm sure the girl who dressed them would love to know that they have them to brighten their little lives."

So instead of being a make-believe Christmas it was a wonderfully rich one after all.

For our sins of the past Christ has paid the penalty. For the temptations of the future he has provided overcoming grace. So why need sin—which is the only thing in the world worth worrying about—cause the Christian a single moment of anxiety?—*Sel.*

Praises are wings to prayer.